

A Way to Think about Levels of Thinking and Knowing

Which level of thinking best characterizes your students?

Which level of thinking best characterizes your teaching?

Shouldn't the teaching be just enough above so as to engender cognitive dissonance without producing educational shut-down due to discouragement?

- (1) "The Observer" - Knowledge is absolute, concrete, available. The only proof needed is direct experience.
- (2) "The Truster" - Truth may not be directly known, but is knowable. All problems have solutions, but we must find them. Some people hold true beliefs, others don't. Authorities are the best sources of right answers.
- (3) "The Feeler" - Authorities know everything that can be known now, but the evidence is incomplete, even to authorities. So, beliefs that feel right are the ones to hold. Ultimately solutions to all problems will be known.
- (4) "The Idiosyncratic" - All people are limited in their knowledge, and uncertainty is real. External validation of any knowledge is impossible. So-called authorities are just as limited as others. Unlike mathematics, real life problems may not be solvable. In real life a problem's structure, parameters, and criteria for resolution are seldom clear.
- (5) "The relativist" - Facts and truth exist, but only in context. Ill-structured problems abound. Any theory or perspective is as good as any other. Knowledge is what you think from where you are. Proof and evidence are entirely domain-dependent. Alternative interpretations cannot be compared.
- (6) "The Evaluator" - Some arguments, perspectives and theories are better than others. Uncertainty is real and context is important. But... there are levels of criteria to guide evaluation. To form judgments about ill-structured problems, one must compare evidence, opinions, and arguments across contexts.
- (7) "The Sage" - Knowledge contains elements of uncertainty, and opinion is subject to interpretation. Yet, justifiable claims about the relative merits of alternative arguments and claims can be made. We (not just I) can assert with justifiable confidence, that some judgments are more reasonable, warranted, justifiable, sensible, or wiser than others.

This set of categories was derived from the book, *Reflective Judgment* by Karen S. Kitchener & Patricia M. King. Any virtues this categorization may have are to the credit of Professors King and Kitchener. However all faults and errors in no way should be attributed to any source other than Insight Assessment.